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ABSTRACT

This document describes a counseling center-developed workshop for incoming college freshmen at Clemson University (South Carolina) designed to help students choose a college major and prepare for study in that major. The workshop described was offered in conjunction with new student orientation as a proactive effort to promote adjustment and to assist students as they make the transition to college. These objectives of the Freshman Workshops are discussed: (1) to assist in the orientation and adjustment of students and parents; (2) to facilitate the process of planning a career and making a decision regarding a college major; (3) to encourage the acquisition of effective work habits and attitudes; and (4) to promote the effective transition from high school to college through assisting students in competently managing developmental tasks. It is noted that the workshops have been conducted for the past five summers and have been attended by between 350 and 400 freshmen and about 200 of their parents each year. This document describes participant characteristics, program content, logistics and cost, and program evaluation. It notes that, in addition to meeting participants' developmental needs and facilitating competency, the workshops also gain the counseling center visibility and revenue. (Author/NB)

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Career Planning and Academic Skills Workshops for Incoming Freshmen

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Program Presented at the

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Abstract

This program describes a Counseling Center-developed workshop for incoming freshmen on choosing a college major and preparing for study in that major. These workshops are offered in conjunction with new student orientation as a proactive effort to promote adjustment and to assist students as they make the transition to college. The objectives of the Freshman Workshops are (1) to assist in the orientation and adjustment of students and parents; (2) to facilitate the process of planning a career and making a decision regarding a college major; (3) to encourage the acquisition of effective work habits and attitudes; and (4) to promote the effective transition from high school to college through assisting students in competently managing developmental tasks. In addition to meeting participants' developmental needs and facilitating competency, the workshops also gain the Counseling Center visibility and revenue.

A Career Planning and Academic Skills Workshop for Incoming Freshmen

For the past five summers the Counseling and Career Planning Center of Clemson University has conducted a series of workshops for freshmen on career planning and academic skills in conjunction with new student orientation. This is a proactive effort, aimed at both students and their parents, that is designed to promote good adjustment and general competency during the freshman year.

We have found that early information on choosing a college major and preparing for study in that major facilitates making a successful transition to college. The workshops also offer incoming freshmen an opportunity to interact with faculty, staff, other freshmen, and continuing students.

The workshops are popular with both parents and students, and have been evaluated very positively. In addition to meeting student needs for counseling services prior to beginning college, the workshops attract good publicity, high visibility, and an additional source of revenue to the Counseling Center.

Description of the Workshops

The principal objectives of the Freshman Workshops

are (a) to assist in the orientation and adjustment of students and parents to the freshman year of college; (b) to facilitate the process of career planning and decision-making regarding majors; (c) to assist in the acquisition of effective work habits and attitudes necessary for success; and (d) to promote the effective transition from high school to college and assist students to competently manage the developmental tasks involved.

Participants

The students participating present a somewhat atypical freshman profile. Results of a study of adjustment using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Baker and Siryk, 1988) performed with a freshman sample in fall 1987, suggested workshop participants are less generally secure compared to a random sample of freshmen non-participants regarding academic, social, and personal adjustment (see Table 1). This may suggest that these students (or their parents) accurately identify themselves as needing this additional assistance.

Attendance is optional, but each day-and-a-half long workshop precedes an orientation session that freshmen are strongly encouraged to attend. Each year between 350 and 400 students (from a freshman class of around 3600) take part in the workshops along with about 200 parents.

Program Content

The workshops have both career and study-skills components as well as a concurrently running parents' program. The career development component of the workshop begins the contact sessions. This is an eight-hour session that emphasizes identifying interests, abilities, and values through testing, discussions, and structured activities; gaining information on the world of work as well as career resource materials available at the Counseling Center; and decision-making through summary forms and individual help from the Counseling Center staff. Before their arrival, all participants are administered the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory (Strong, Campbell, & Hansen, 1984) and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1977). Interpretation of these instruments comprises an important part of the career workshop.

The three-hour study skills part of the workshop stresses developing effective study, time-management, and test-taking skills; and creating constructive work habits and attitudes. Demonstrations of effective study activities are provided. Results of the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (Brown & Holtzman, 1966) and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) are utilized in this part of the workshop to provide feedback on work habits and learning style. Also, a panel of currently enrolled students answers questions and

offers suggestions for getting off to a successful start. This has been a very popular part of the program.

The parents' component of the program consists of information presented on the normal developmental issues college students face and addressing parents' questions and concerns about the year ahead. Parental involvement in all aspects of the program is encouraged. The parents also receive the results of their MBTI and are encouraged to discuss differences in personal styles and patterns with their students. Throughout the sessions, interaction among parents, students, and presenters is encouraged. Also, occasional breaks allow an opportunity for refreshments and socializing.

Logistics and Costs

Planning is completed in the late spring and a brochure inviting participants mailed. Although preparation and planning were initially time-consuming, currently the only administrative difficulties are managing materials, scheduling rooms, and arranging for refreshment breaks and audiovisual needs.

Expenses incurred are passed on to the participants through a nominal fee. This project is actually a money-maker that has enabled the Center to purchase PC's, supplies, career resource materials, and professional books for our

office library.

Results and Discussion

The workshops are evaluated using a five-choice Likert-type scale. Data from the past two years indicate an overall helpfulness rating of 4.39. Written suggestions are also solicited and frequently will be integrated into the following year's planning. Contact with the participants over the course of time they attend Clemson University suggests that these students have fewer changes of major, are likely to persist, and maintain the GPA close to that predicted at time of their admission. Participants from the summer of 1987 earned a freshman year grade point average of 2.74, which compares favorably to the overall freshman class average of 2.45 for that year. Throughout the workshop, participants are made familiar with the Counseling Center's services and encouraged to utilize them during the years they spend at the University. Our records indicate that many do so.

This workshop is a successful, proactive component of our services that fills a gap in students' orientation to college. In addition to helping incoming freshmen to master developmental tasks, this workshop enables our Center to gain valuable visibility and acceptance with both new students and their parents. Positive outcomes in regard to fewer changes

in major, better grades, good adjustment, and a smoother transition into the freshman year have been noted.

References

Baker, R. W., & Siryk, B. (1988). Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire Manual. Los Angeles, CA: Western Psychological Services.

Brown, W. F., & Holtzman W. H. (1967). The Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes Manual. NY: The Psychological Corporation.

Campbell, D. P., & Hansen, J. C. (1981). Manual for the SVIB-SCII (3rd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Myers, I. B. (1962). Manual: Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Table 1

Adjustment Scores by Group

	Workshop Participants (n=109)		Freshman Sample (n=82)	
Scale	M	SD	M	SD
Academic Adjustment	144.34	27.60	150.72	24.17
Social Adjustment	124.74	28.63	129.27	26.20
Personal/Emotional Adj.	87.68	21.14	95.63	19.70
Attachment/Commitment	107.98	20.34	109.50	18.41
Adjustment Score Total	411.25	65.21	428.37	57.97